

Southern Regional Association  
for the Blind

CONFERENCE - 1958

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**CONFERENCE REPORT: No. 43**

THE SOUTHERN REGIONAL ASSOCIATION  
FOR THE BLIND

CONFERENCE

held at

THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, BIRMINGHAM

on

TUESDAY, 25th FEBRUARY, 1958

*Subjects:*

**The Occupation Centre of the Royal School for the Blind**

**The Problem of Communicating with Deaf-Blind People**

*Chairman:*

**Councillor: Mrs. A. F. Wood, C.B.E., J.P.**



## **PROGRAMME**

**Introduction by Chairman,  
COUNCILLOR MRS. A. F. WOOD, C.B.E., J.P.**

**Opening Address by the Lord Mayor of Birmingham  
ALDERMAN J. J. GROGAN, M.B.E., J.P.**

**“The Occupational Centre of the Royal School  
for the Blind”**

**REVEREND B. G. BARTLETT, M.A. (Cantab),  
Principal and Chaplain,  
Royal School for the Blind, Leatherhead.**

### **Luncheon Interval**

**“The problem of communicating with deaf-blind people.”**

#### **Speakers :**

**EDWARD EVANS, C.B.E., M.P.**

**President of the National Deaf-Blind Helpers League,  
Chairman of the National Institute for the Deaf,  
and Chairman of Ministry of Health Advisory Committee  
on the Health and Welfare of Handicapped Persons**

**MISS M. A. HENHAM-BARROW**

**Secretary, Southern Regional Association for the Blind**

**MISS C. M. SEYMOUR**

**Welfare Officer for the Blind  
Middlesex County Council**

**Questions and General Discussion**

**Votes of Thanks**





## MORNING SESSION

### Introduction

The Right Worshipful the Lord Mayor of Birmingham opened the Conference and welcomed the delegates to Birmingham. Speaking as a layman he thought that the communication with deaf-blind people and their response was something nearly approaching a miracle and he would like to thank all those good people who by patience and perseverance and love of humanity had undertaken this very important work of helping those who were less fortunate than themselves.

He wished the Conference all God Speed in its endeavours and hoped that the work being done for the blind would go on increasing in the light of experience and that as a result it would be possible to give them even more help in the years to come.

The Chairman, Councillor Mrs. A. F. Wood, C.B.E., J.P., thanked the Lord Mayor for coming on an extremely busy day to welcome the Conference. The Lord Mayor then left the meeting.

The Chairman said that the Welfare Committee of Birmingham also wished to give the delegates a warm welcome to the city and she explained that several members of the Special Welfare Services Sub-Committee which dealt in detail with the blind of Birmingham, would come in during the day to see how the Conference was progressing.

Councillor Mrs. F. Wood then introduced the Reverend B. G. Bartlett, M.A., Principal and Chaplain of the Royal School for the Blind, as the speaker for the morning session of the Conference. The Chairman reminded the audience that the Royal School had a technical training department, an occupation department, workshops, and hostels and homes. Blind, deaf-blind, and deaf-dumb-blind persons were admitted to all departments and homes belonging to the school and the occupation centre, which was the subject of the talk, was unique in that it was the only one of its kind in the country. The occupation department, as Mr. Bartlett would illustrate, catered for persons who, though untrainable, should, for their own welfare, be fully occupied each day.

**The Reverend B. G. Bartlett, M.A. (Cantab), The Occupation Centre of the Royal School for the Blind :**

Madam Chairman, Miss Henham-Barrow and all my friends here. To-day I am going to give you a small idea of a residential occupation centre, although at Leatherhead we have in addition workshops and a technical training department, but I am not talking about that side of the work to-day.

We have to go back to January 1st, 1951 when I was feeling very raw (and still am) and Miss Bramhall from the Ministry of Health came down to see me. She talked to me about blind welfare and explained the very great need in the country for something to be done for those people who were called unemployable. Her experience had shown, in going round the country, that there were fairly young people rusting away in homes for the aged.

I talked to my committee about the matter and found them most sympathetic and shortly after that I went to a meeting with Mr. Myers at Condoval Hall School. Representatives from Birmingham and Shropshire County Council were also present and we discussed the question of ineducable children and the misfits in life. On returning to Leatherhead I wrote thirty "guinea pig" letters to Local Authorities asking if they would be interested if we started a residential occupation centre. On the whole the responses were very good.

### **Types of disabilities**

In 1952 we opened the residential occupation centre with one craft instructor and one resident whom I shall never forget. She was a woman of fifty from Berkshire and she came to us suffering from hysterical blindness and malnutrition. We spent hours attempting to deal with the hysteria but after about ten months, good food and occupation played their part. She became de-registered and is to-day a fully-sighted person. From that early start we have grown and we now employ three full-time craft instructors for the handicraft section only. In addition other people help such as the gardener, the housekeeper, the carpenter and the school technical instructors, all of whom have one or two pupils in the centre. We have not set any age limit for the department, although we naturally prefer to include the younger rather than the older and they must be over sixteen. The average age would be between twenty-five and thirty, although several are just over sixteen and a couple of men are nearly sixty-eight.

We refer to the residents of the department as "the family," we do not use the word "blind," neither the word "resident," but everyone at the school is the "family." The residents are either registered blind or partially sighted and in addition to this a large number are deaf; about six deaf and dumb; four spastic; some two or three diabetic who have to have injections of insulin every day; quite a few are mild epileptics; two are on licence from mental homes and one is on probationary order from a Recorder's Court, so we do have all sorts of people with many and varied disabilities. We have accepted all these disabilities because no one else seemed willing to take them. My



staff felt they were in blind welfare to do a job of work and so we have never refused anyone on account of a disability. We cannot take major epileptics, but we do take mild epileptics with perhaps two fits a week and blackouts.

Some boys are scholastically ineducable; on the other hand we have one boy who is an L.R.A.M. but cannot make the grade in life. Generally speaking, I would say the average level of intelligence of this department is lower Condover Hall School. To give you some idea, the I.Q. we are dealing with is perhaps 60, sometimes dropping to 40. One ineducable boy has been taught by my blind organist and braille instructress and has joined the choir, she teaches him hymns and he knows the whole of the service by heart. On Sundays he sings in the service whatever the psalm, and while he is officially ineducable, we are able to do something for him. One of the two men who came on licence had spent twenty years in a mental home in Somerset, why he went there no one knows. I have a feeling he went blind and perhaps had a tantrum and was locked up and forgotten about. About two years ago I became his guardian and a little while ago the Clerk of the Guardians came to my office, talked to him, listened to what we had to say, and he has been completely de-certified and signed off, so he is now a free member of the community. He will qualify as a journeyman basket-maker in July of this year. This does not often happen in the occupational department and he is on the whole one of the exceptions.

### **Programme and Activities**

The hours of work for the occupation department are shorter than for the technical departments. They work from Monday to Friday from a quarter-to-nine to midday and a quarter-to-two to half-past-four, and all members join in the usual activities of the school—choir, cricket, soccer. The Epsom racing boys are very good in coming and giving our boys a game of soccer. We have socials, dances, games and sports days.

New arrivals are handed over to Miss Margaret Evans, our Merioneth who went blind while swatting for her examinations Mobility Instructress. She is a trained children's nurse from for general nursing. After rehabilitation at America Lodge she was sent to me as a technical trainee in flat machine knitting. With her background of School Certificate with six credits, it seemed rather a waste to make her into a flat machine knitter and we persuaded her Local Authority to let her come on the staff as Mobility Instructress. She also assists in the teaching of general subjects and braille and the difference she has made is absolutely astonishing.

I myself try to teach people to walk. I was in our grounds one day recently teaching a fellow blinded by a test-tube explosion in the laboratory. He said, "It's all very well for you—you can see." I *could* see; Miss Evans however, is totally blind and having conquered her blindness, she can now pass on to new residents the confidence she has acquired and experiences she has gone through. One of our greatest achievements I feel, is of a man of about twenty-five. He has been blind nearly all his life and could not even go to our dining-room unaided at first. Now every day he swings down the drive and goes to the local pub by himself, buys a pint of beer and comes back.

My senior instructor in the occupation centre is a registered blind man, my Organist is totally blind, as is the Mobility Instructress, because I have the theory 'hat the best people to help those who are blind—perhaps frustrated—are people who have themselves had to go through the mill and know what is best to help them.

### **Accommodation and Medical Care**

With regard to financial arrangements, we accept everybody in the occupation department under Part Three Accommodation, which means that they draw the National Assistance grant of 17/- per day; the Local Authority pays the difference and also gives us £10 per quarter for the running expenses of the department. It doesn't cover expenses by any means.

The workrooms themselves are quite distinct from the living accommodation, and we have various hostels which we attempt to run as ordinary real homes. We are in the process at the moment of converting the main building, a very lovely building built in the days of huge dormitories. There are three floors for distinct and separate hostels and every dormitory has been split up into cubicles so that every pupil in the school has his or her own bedroom which can be their own little kingdom in life. We try to make everyone self-reliant. Everyone makes their own bed, they bath without help and most of them shave themselves (the men, of course!) We do try hard not to isolate or segregate the members of our occupation department but try to make them feel that they are part of the whole set-up of the School, and my own conviction is, that if anyone sets up a new occupation department, it should not be something on its own, but be part of blind welfare—forming part of workshops or technical training centre. I could deal with more boys and girls if we could find more training staff. We pass on suitable people to the workshops where we can watch their progress. If we find they can make the grade we write to the Local Authority and ask them to transfer him or her to the technical training department.

We have found since opening the occupation department that the medical side is fairly terrific and we now have our own visiting Ophthalmic Surgeon; Orthopædic Surgeon; Ear, Nose and Throat Surgeon; and Dermatologist, who are also members of the Committee. In the last four and a half years the Ophthalmic Surgeon has performed ten or eleven corneal grafts. This does not mean that he has given full sight but he has improved the sight of some people who could see dimly. The School Doctor holds a clinic at the school two days a week so that everyone is examined periodically. My matron is a fully qualified State Registered Nurse and she tells me that 40 per cent of the residents of the occupation centre have to take some form of barbiturates every day, phenobarbitone or luminal, and that will give you some idea of the people and their disability.

### **Achievements**

You may ask "Are you doing something new?" I feel we are. The Home Teachers of this country are doing a terrific job of work and one which is in some ways similar to the one we are trying to do, but I believe the difference is in this word "residential." It means that instruction and supervision are constant, and I think my own instructors are more fortunate having our people for five or six hours every day, whereas the Home Teacher may visit Mrs. Smith to-day and may not see her again for say, ten days. It has made all the difference to the people coming to us that they have the constant company and comradeship of their fellows. Even those from nice homes have been lonely, because they have had no one to share their thoughts with during the day, and this new comradeship has helped them mentally and psychologically.

We do not nurse our people. We are careful to keep wheelbarrows off paths and to guard fires and stoves adequately, but otherwise we try to keep life exactly as it is elsewhere and to ensure it is not too much a world of its own. Therefore we encourage our people to go out. Once tea is over at five o'clock they are absolutely free until 10.30 at night and we do not ask them what they do. We must have some rules—times of meals and lights out, but as far as possible we like the words of St. Paul, "All things are lawful but all things are not always expedient", and try to use common sense.

We find that all organisations at Leatherhead, Toc H, etc., are helpful and invite our people to join them and lead a fuller life. A senior occupation department instructor says that all residents refer to the department activities as "my work" and take pride in doing a good job of work. Some of the things they turn out are perfect and others just have to be burned.



## Difficulties to be surmounted

I cannot conclude without mentioning our own School Chapel. It is a very beautiful church and it does play a great part in people's rehabilitation, because it is no good you and I trying to care for the body and mind if we are going to leave out the other thing we took on—the spirit—and we do try in our own way to cater for the body, the mind and the spirit. It is no good saying we do not make mistakes and never have any troubles; not a day passes without having a new problem, but I feel we are blazing the trail of the residential occupation department. No one has ever done it before and there is no one to give advice, therefore we can only learn by our own mistakes.

If anyone is going to start a similar venture elsewhere we could give them the benefit of our experience and I would say a few things are essential. There must be frequent visits by qualified medical men if the occupation centre is going to take the halt and the maimed and not just the blind. There must be a big medical side including a qualified nurse on the staff, her job is a terrific one. The instructors should be qualified in some particular craft, but should also have sound common sense. We have not discovered any new crafts and teach sea-grass stools, loom-weaving and hand-knitting. If you can find anything new, tell us and we would like to have a shot at it.

It is essential to hand-pick the hostel staff as they have a twenty-four hour job and are frequently dug out in the middle of the night. Forty days holiday in the year sounds a lot but they need it because they are on duty all the time. My instructors shut the door at five o'clock but the work of the hostel staff never ends. We allow both sexes to mix freely in the department, they have meals together and participate in communal activities although the hostels are separate as a matter of convenience. In the Handicraft section itself, people have to change their tasks frequently as they cannot keep at the same thing too long.

I have attempted to give you a very brief idea of what we are trying to do. We are very proud of our effort because it is the only one in the country at the moment and as I say, we have made errors and will make errors. It is difficult to talk about our work and I would prefer to take you round and show you what we are trying to do and I give each one of you an invitation to visit us. It is our proud boast that all our visitors are impressed with one thing—the spirit of happiness. Some visitors arrive saying, "I don't want to see blind people, it will be harrowing". They go away humbled and cheered because on the whole we do run as a very happy family, which is *Lux in Tenebris* (Light in Darkness). We hope that in our small way we are

succeeding in bringing a little more light to part of the blind world which had been forgotten and overlooked.

**The Chairman** in throwing open the meeting for questions and discussion remarked that she had heard the Leatherhead Occupation Department mentioned at Condover Hall School more than anywhere else. When there was difficulty in placing a school leaver the possibility of Leatherhead was always discussed because the not-so-intelligent of the blind community were accepted there. Often those who had previously been backward responded to the training in the occupation department and this training gave them a much fuller life than they would otherwise have had.

**Mr. Goakes (Walsall)** : I was very interested in the Rev. Bartlett making reference to the fact that he took in all and not just the best of the blind. I wonder if he has any system of follow-up ? Does he know the results of the training ? Has he been able to follow-up when they get home ? Is there any permanent hostel connected with the occupation school ? Would it be desirable ?

**Rev. Bartlett** : Of the ninety in the occupation department, eighty-five are there for life. Either they come from homes from which they have been shut out and to which they could not go back, or there just isn't a home.

**Mr. Emms (Wolverhampton)** : Is there any system of reward or payment to the workers for the work they do ?

**Rev. Bartlett** : On paper we do not pay.

**Miss Simmonds (Leicester)** : Is there a waiting list for the Home and could you give us any idea of the time it would be necessary to wait ?

**Rev. Bartlett** : We have expanding sides as we can use the temporary hostels built for the bombed of London when we were requisitioned during the war. As we grow we can adapt another hostel and at the moment we can take everybody.

**Miss Henham-Barrow** : Some Home Teachers escort their charges everywhere. What do you do with a Home Teacher when she brings someone to Leatherhead ? You must get to know a lot of Home Teachers in that way.

**Rev. Bartlett** : All Home Teachers who bring their charges to Leatherhead stay the night there and go back the next day, but we do sometimes meet the Home Teacher at a London railway station and we bring on the charge, so that she can have a little break in London.

**Miss Henham-Barrow** : We have just included a visit to Leatherhead in the curriculum of our Training Course and all



the trainees now go down to Leatherhead during their training which they find most helpful.

**Miss Seymour (Middlesex):** Has the Rev. Bartlett ever approached any firm in open industry in the Leatherhead district for small assembly work? We have tried to find some in Middlesex for people to do in their own homes but it needs so much supervision and cartage and there are difficulties. I think however, there is a certain amount of this work.

**Rev. Bartlett:** We have tried unsuccessfully, due on the whole to the speed at which the residents work. There are firms such as Ronson, Goblin, etc., from whom it would be easy to get this work, but if they give it to us on Monday they want it back by the end of the week which is impossible for our people. Therefore we have never tied ourselves to these firms in that way.

**Miss Henham-Barrow:** I know why, in the case of Miss Evans, you selected her, but how do you select your paragon staff? To live with this sort of job twenty-four hours out of twenty-four obviously calls for a definite sense of vocation. How do you find these people? As you say, everyone at Leatherhead is happy, I remember when I came to your Harvest Festival they were bubbling over with happiness. There must be some basic ingredient.

**Rev. Bartlett:** It is trial and error. My present Matron has been with me for four years but the previous two only lasted a fortnight. I am short of a House Mistress and cannot replace her because I cannot get the person we want.

Miss Henham-Barrow asked about trainees on completion of training.

**Rev. Bartlett:** At Leatherhead we train them and the London factory employs them, but in the last seven years I have only sent two up to the workshops. They refused to go. So we now actually have a factory, and Mr. O'Neil, the London manager, is the Trade Manager. He does both jobs. Mr. Leppard has joined the staff and that makes all the difference.

**Mr. Goakes (Walsall)** was not quite sure if Leatherhead was entirely for the blind or if non-blind were also accepted. He asked the Rev. Bartlett if he recommended a home entirely for the blind or mixed with the sighted. If there were sighted in Leatherhead, how did they mix?

**Rev. Bartlett:** I mentioned the halt and the maimed but I meant that they had these disabilities in addition to blindness. Strictly speaking I do not think our spastic people should be registered blind, as they can see well about a hundred yards

away, but they are officially registered and mix very well with the others. In that particular hostel we have a girl who is dying of heart disease. She cannot get out, so we have bought her a television set as she has a good deal of sight. We find all the totally blind people in that hostel like television better than listening to sound radio. My own committee said they were willing to take a few other disabled people whom we could train as instructors, but only Middlesex have ever offered us anybody.

**Mr. Goakes (Walsall):** What are your views on separate homes or places for the blind? Two of our younger blind suggested that the blind should be mixed with sighted people and live the ordinary life of the community.

**Rev. Bartlett:** I agree with them absolutely, so long as wheelbarrows are not left about. Provided you are catering for the blind people's safety first, it is quite a good thing for them to mix with others.

**Mr. Winterbottom (Stoke)** thought it was a great pity that more Home Teachers did not have the opportunity of visiting Leatherhead because without seeing it it was impossible to imagine the work being done and the type of person being catered for. He suggested that the Southern Regional Association might encourage local authorities to give Home Teachers the opportunity and possibly some assistance to see such places as Leatherhead.

**Rev. Bartlett:** I have just told Miss Henham-Barrow that any time after next mid-summer we would welcome the Southern Regional Conference at Leatherhead and would provide you with lunch as guests of the School, so that we can teach you a little about Blind Welfare!

**Miss Henham-Barrow:** I appreciate Mr. Winterbottom's remark, a lot of the North Midland people cannot get down to London for our day conferences. Perhaps it might be possible to include such visits of observation, providing the local authority or Home Teacher can pay the travelling expenses, during the S.R.A.B. Refresher Courses.

Mr. Winterbottom agreed that it would be a very good thing and the Chairman added that if it were arranged the people from the Midlands would overcome any difficulties.

The Chairman then called upon Mrs. Brown to propose a vote of thanks to the Rev. Bartlett.

Mrs. Brown said that they had all listened to the Rev. Bartlett's story with great interest. It was very heartening to know that so much was being done for these people and it was sometimes helpful, when one of their own blind went away to a home, to know what it was like. After to-day they would not be forced to say they did not know.

## AFTERNOON SESSION

The Chairman, in opening the afternoon session of the Conference, announced an alteration in the advertised programme, as unfortunately, Mr. Edward Evans, C.B.E., M.P., was unable to be present. Medical advice prevented him from undertaking the journey from London in the severe weather prevailing, as he had only very recently recovered from an illness. The Chairman read a telegram of apology which she had received from Mr. Evans, and was asked by the meeting to send a message to Mr. Evans expressing great regret at his enforced absence.

Councillor Mrs. Wood said that the two speakers who were also scheduled for the afternoon, had been asked to extend their addresses dealing with the problem of the deaf-blind, and she then introduced the first speaker, Miss M. A. Henham-Barrow, the Secretary of the Southern Regional Association for the Blind.

### Miss M. A. Henham-Barrow

I am so glad to have this opportunity of describing the experimental residential course which our Association organized in 1957. The undertaking was a happy one, and I am so glad that some of the Home Teachers who attended it are here to-day, and can share with me this first full account within the region of what was an exciting, exhausting, but infinitely rewarding venture. The advantages of some further research into the welfare needs of deaf-blind people were considered by our deaf-blind Committee late in 1956, for the numbers involved in the Southern Region present a sizeable problem, and I will give you the figures as at 31st December, 1956 :

Deaf, without Speech	...	...	221
Deaf, without Speech and with other disabilities	...	...	101
Deaf, with Speech	...	...	1,168
Deaf, with Speech but with other disabilities	...	...	249
Hard of hearing	...	...	2,848
Hard of hearing, with other disabilities			568
			<hr/> 5,155 <hr/>

The Course, which was well supported by local authorities throughout the region, was divided into two separate weeks, and the theme was "Means of Communication". Our speakers were all experts in their own field. As we were grappling with ways of communicating it seemed important to have an audiologist; a speech therapist, because conversation of speech is so vital to the deaf-blind, and someone who knew thoroughly the finger-

spelling methods. Time was set aside for social activities and ordinary every-day pursuits, such as walks in the morning to look at the sea, visiting the local café for morning coffee—things we take for granted but which a deaf-blind person cannot do without an escort. The remaining time we spent in handicrafts.

Thirty-four people attended the course—seventeen deaf-blind and seventeen Home Teachers. They arrived on the Saturday when there was a welcome and opening of the Course. On Sunday morning we walked and Mr. Sculthorpe spoke in the evening. On Monday we had the audiologist; on Tuesday we dealt with speech; Wednesday with finger-spelling; Thursday and Friday with handicrafts and on Saturday we had the farewell and started all over again. Eight deaf-blind attended the first week and nine the second.

Our original circular to local authorities explained that the purpose of the Course was research, to live side by side with the deaf-blind for a week, to share their problems, and to find out how to help them adequately. The local authorities were particularly asked to send people to the Course who would participate fully in the discussions. Every speaker regulated his or her speech to enable the Home Teacher to transcribe to the deaf-blind person. (History relates that one of the Home Teachers, after the first week, went to bed for two days because of the strenuous time!) Each deaf-blind person was expected to contribute something and indeed, both they and the Home Teachers contributed very fully.

The difference in the types of people on the Course was incredible. The average age on the first week was 55 and on the second, 62. The most active were in the first group who were thoroughly alive and alert, eager to listen and talk, and on the whole able to express themselves very fluently. They were highly intelligent and responsive and most of them were keen Braille or Moon readers. They appeared to be leading comparatively full lives and to have a well-balanced and objective outlook on their own problems and everything else. Once it was possible to communicate with them it was very easy to follow Mr. Sculthorpe's advice and to think of them as normal people who happened to be deaf and blind.

The second group with perhaps two exceptions, seemed less well adjusted, to have less vitality and to be more restricted. It might have been a matter of intelligence or temperament, but I felt they had been too isolated and their potentialities not brought out. Perhaps more could be done to help them overcome their limitations though it might be difficult for a stranger to approach them. One of them, aged about eighty, had great



spiritual serenity, and made me feel it was important that they should have contact with clergy of their own denomination.

### **Means of Communication**

Mr. Sculthorpe was most impressive. He stressed how very necessary it was for deaf-blind people to go more than half way to meet the sighted world ; they must not think they had nothing to offer and must be prepared to sell themselves to the sighted world ; it was up to them to bother to learn the manual and not to turn down offers of help. He described how he coped with his own deafness and blindness, and how he made himself thoroughly mobile. He then impressed upon them the need to use block capital letters.

Block capitals was the theme of our conversations on communications, because there was recently a meeting in America of a sub-committee of the World Council formed by three deaf-blind people, to try and found a Universal Manual. The representatives were from the Netherlands and America and Mr. Sculthorpe from England, and Mr. Evans (the designer of our Manual Alphabet), as an observer. Correspondence had been going on for years about a Universal Manual Alphabet but Mr. Evans returned from America convinced that the present difficulties were too great to establish one, and the meeting recommended the use of block capital letters. Mr. Evans had intended to-day to talk about the meeting and the need for possible additions to our own Manual ; there are after all, no signs for " Yes " and " No ".

### **Speakers :**

There was a degree of informality in our discussion throughout the Course, and it was interesting to see the deaf-blind coming to life. By Monday all had relaxed and by Wednesday one heard spontaneous laughter which thrilled me tremendously.

The Audiologist in the first week was Mr. Mcpherson, and in the second week, Miss W. Galbraith. They gave some very interesting hearing tests which resulted in the discovery that in three of the seventeen people on the Course there was some residual hearing which would respond to a hearing aid. We were able to arrange for them to go to the Royal National Ear, Nose and Throat Hospital where they were fitted with aids and went home from the Course as blind people rather than deaf-blind which was a thrilling thing.

The Speech Therapist for the first week was Miss Renfrew from the Churchill Hospital, and the second week, Miss Drury from the Royal Berkshire Hospital, Reading. They both gave some very interesting and helpful exercises for the conservation of



speech—throwing the voice forward, etc., which was new ground to most of the Home Teachers there, and valuable to them. The comments on the deaf-blind throughout were also invaluable, i.e. a little old lady recited a charming thing on the Magic of Words and as she could hardly speak, it shows how important is the conservation of speech. The deaf-blind must practise—keep them talking if you can.

On the deaf side, the Reverend Young, Chaplain and Missioner for the Deaf of the Hants and Isle of Wight Deaf Association, went very fully through the deaf manual. He thought that people born deaf who later went blind, widened their vocabulary when they learnt the deaf-blind manual. More words reached them because the deaf-blind do not shorten sentences as the deaf do for the sake of speed. Mr. Young gave an example of a deaf and dumb man charged at a police court.

The deaf-blind said they tell the character of a person writing to them through the hand, which was an interesting point.

### **Social activities and some personalities**

Guy Fawkes Day occurred during the first week and with much trepidation I bought some fireworks. The excitement was intense. It so happened that all the deaf-blind had some vision that week and they kept rushing to the window to see if it was raining. They went to bed like children, thrilled because they felt the same as the people next door. Participating in the activities of firework night greatly added to their rehabilitation.

One night we had a social and, as one man loved playing the drum, Matron borrowed one from the Salvation Army and he sat there banging it rhythmically with the rest of the deaf-blind people bobbing up and down playing "Tipperary". It broke the ice, and brought the house down and Mr. B. sat biffing the drum as he had wanted to do for twenty years.

This same man had been a miner and was extraordinarily well read. His family, though not unkind to him, did not bother much about him beyond attending to his creature comforts and he had become very difficult, probably through frustration. By Tuesday his normal self had emerged and he was really a charming and lovable man with innate good manners. I saw him that morning in a café with his Home Teacher who told him that I was coming in. He stood up and invited me to join them for coffee and then he paid the bill in a perfectly natural way. Yet this was the man who said on arrival, that he felt a fool putting his hand out into mid-air to try the block capital letter system. He did, however, soon after making that statement and when the speech therapist arrived, asked her to use block capitals which he said he would understand, and apologised for not knowing the Manual.

Miss S. was a 69-year-old woman who looked 81. She was tall and very frail, her hair was dishevelled, her clothes were nondescript and covered in food stains and spots, and she looked decrepit. Her Home Teacher brought her, hoping the Course would find some way of solving her problems. She had lived in a sighted nursing home for eleven years. Her relatives never visited her but had established a trust fund out of which they paid five guineas a week for a dingy room with appalling furniture. No one on the staff ever spoke to her and her only friends were two local Home Teachers. Her loneliness, isolation, and nervousness were pathetic indeed, but, bit by bit, we were able to draw her out. The Audiologist found she had a useful degree of hearing and she was one of those whom I have already mentioned as being fixed up with a proper hearing aid. She is now going to a home for the blind as opposed to a deaf-blind home. She is an educated person and writes occasionally, and says she has now been admitted to a world surrounded by friends.

Another man we found had some useful residual hearing, and after speaking to his local authority on the telephone, he was fixed up with a Medresco. He told us quite movingly, when we were giving him lessons in learning to listen, that it was the first human voice he had heard for eight years. Now he listens to the radio.

### **Results of the Course**

The results of the Course are very difficult indeed to assess. We feel it has been a success from the social as well as from the educational point of view. We thoroughly thrashed out the Manual alphabet and decided we could not see any advantage in changing it at the moment. We wondered about some letters—B, Z, E and P—but the deaf-blind themselves could see no way of improvement. They felt that precision of movement and firmness in pressure made for speed rather than introducing alterations in the Manual. They thought the introduction of "Yes" and "No" signs might be considered as national additions and we suggested a sign for "I don't know". Possibly three taps for the latter was a good idea.

We all agreed that the Manual as it stands is rather slow, indeed Mr. Sculthorpe himself, uses a series of Braille contractions. We discussed sensitivity of the body and the receiving of the Manual and communication on other parts of the body, besides the palm of the hand. We also discussed the suggestion of Mr. Young that a leaflet or book be printed bearing suitable ink-print Braille contractions and suitable words from the deaf Manual, not the ones that touch the face, as we thought these would be too terrifying for the deaf-blind. Of course, we realized

that such contractions would only be a supplement to the Manual, to be used by those sighted hearing people in constant contact and communication with the deaf-blind, but it might be a way of speeding up reception of the Manual.

My Association is forming a small sub-committee to consider Mr. Evans' recommendation to explore the Manual and sensitivity of reception, as well as the suggestion of Mr. Young. This was a positive outcome of the Course which was for the common good of the deaf-blind. I think there was also the individual good which resulted from the Course. I believe it is essential to establish services at a Regional level to help the local authorities with those individual deaf-blind problems, of which there are not sufficient numbers to provide specialist services. I shall be grateful for suggestions this afternoon and I know that my Committee will be equally glad. We must establish something that these deaf-blind people can look forward to and in which they can fully participate. We certainly hope to go ahead in some way, perhaps by means of a regional holiday for the deaf-blind. They could either be accompanied by their own people or one Home Teacher might be in charge of three or four deaf-blind people. I feel that the fact that three out of seventeen were found with sufficient hearing to benefit from a hearing aid, suggests perhaps that when the first hearing aids were provided the older people were not on the priority lists and that no re-assessment of need has been made since the pressure on issue of hearing aids has been relieved.

## **Conclusion**

It was certainly very moving at Bournemouth, to see these deaf-blind men and women arrive like sticks, utter sticks, and then become active ; writing vigorously on each others' hands ; forming friendships and being sorry to go ; declaring to write to each other and to other people in the same position as themselves.

The Course made clear to me the importance of some specialisation for the deaf-blind. They need individual attention, different from that given to the blind, and of course their speed is much slower, which is a great time-consuming factor in a Home Teacher's life. Miss Mary Thomas spent two or three days with us during the first week. We shared concern regarding some follow-up to the deaf-blind of an experience of this kind. She suggested the publication of a magazine made up of letters and articles written by the deaf-blind attending ; she undertook to assemble and edit the material and offered a prize for the best essay on the week's course. She also started a limerick and asked them to complete it, for which a prize was also offered. We eventually issued a publication from our office in inkprint and in



braille, and these were circulated to all the deaf-blind concerned accordingly. The circulation of the inkprint edition has, of course, gone wider than that small circle.

All this has, perhaps, been rather rambling as I have had to expand it unexpectedly, but I hope I have been able to give you a picture of this very thrilling experience. The Home Teachers told me that they had learnt as much in that one week about their own deaf-blind people as they had been able to learn in two and a half years on the district. I think the Course is summed up by a letter sent to me from one of the deaf-blind men. He said he considered it to be a grand idea and would like to go again. The benefits were great and it had given him confidence and the will to learn. He now knew that many people were ready to help him if he would let them.

**Miss Adams** (Ministry of Health) rose to follow up the point of the Medrescos. She was very struck by the fact that one man's test five years previously, had not been followed up. When Medresco aids were first issued people of working age, mothers of young children, etc., had priority. She shared Miss Henham-Barrow's worry that some elderly blind people, not perhaps on the priority list in the first place, had not been re-examined, and three out of seventeen suggested that the elderly had not been re-assessed. Equally it was necessary to keep on one's toes for any modern methods for the restoration of sight.

**Miss Henham-Barrow** said that led her to mention the leaflet which the Ministry of Health issued recently on the Prevention and Alleviation of Deafness, followed up by a Memorandum on the Prevention and Alleviation of Blindness, circulated throughout the medical world.

**The Chairman** thanked Miss Henham-Barrow for stepping into the hiatus caused by Mr. Evans' absence. They were now on time and she would therefore call on Miss Seymour to address the Conference. Miss Seymour was well known for her work with the Middlesex County Council.

**Miss Seymour**

**Specialist Home Teachers for the Blind.**

Some of you will remember the Southern Regional Conference in 1952, about three months after our first Specialist Home Teacher in Middlesex was appointed. This appointment followed the Working Party's Report on the special needs of Deaf-Blind persons, which suggested that, where the number of deaf-blind persons in a particular area justified it, the Local Authority concerned should consider appointing a qualified Home Teacher possessing special experience to work among deaf-blind persons, to advise generally

on their welfare and to co-ordinate the work of Home Teachers in dealing with them. At the Conference, Miss Moody Stuart pointed out that the appointment of the Specialist Home Teacher was experimental. As there were approximately 95 deaf-blind people in Middlesex the Council thought it would be justified in appointing a Home Teacher and making the experiment in the hope that it might prove beneficial to the deaf-blind people in the county.

That the experiment was well worth making was borne out in 1955 by the County Council appointing a second Home Teacher Specialist who worked part-time with the deaf-blind. We now have nearly 4,000 blind and 900 partially sighted on our register in Middlesex, and 99 deaf-blind people and nine partially sighted. Some of these are in Homes and Workshops out of the county and the numbers actually being visited by the Specialist Home Teachers are 78 deaf-blind and nine partially sighted.

You will want to know how the scheme has worked during the incubation period. The Specialist Home Teacher first had to visit every deaf-blind person on the Register, in order to assess the individual needs of each person. In every case the introduction was effected by the local Home Teacher who already knew the deaf-blind person. It was decided that the specialist Home Teacher would be responsible for the day-to-day care of the deaf-blind, but that she should work in co-operation with the local Home Teacher. The first contact with the deaf-blind person is always made by the local Home Teacher who is looking after all the blind people in that area. If that Home Teacher finds it is impossible to communicate by ordinary speech, either with or without a hearing aid, she introduces the specialist Home Teacher. It is the Specialist who decides whether the case should be hers or remain with the Home Teacher, but if she accepts the case she is responsible for the care of that person. She is responsible for the visiting and also responsible for calling in the help of the local Home Teacher and any local facilities that are available.

At times, as you can imagine, there is frequent visiting necessary for deaf-blind people, and a great deal of time has to be spent on one individual, and this is where the specialist Home Teacher calls on the help of the local Home Teacher. It may be necessary for the local Home Teacher to supplement her visits to the individual who is requiring special care at that time ; or to keep the specialist in touch with other deaf-blind people while she herself is spending an abnormal amount of time on one person.

In Middlesex recently, there was a case in point which involved the eviction order of a deaf-blind person. She required almost individual attention from the deaf-blind Teacher over a period



of months, and this included a number of visits to the Poor Man's Lawyer and also acting as interpreter in Court. This made it necessary for her to rely on the Area Home Teachers to keep her in touch with the other deaf-blind people in her care, and I think this co-operation between the Specialist and the Area Home Teachers is absolutely essential if the scheme is to be worked at all. So far as Middlesex is concerned, it has worked extremely well and that is due, I am sure, to the fact that our Specialists have a vocation for the work which is respected by every Home Teacher in the area.

### **Handicraft classes and clubs**

The deaf-blind who can benefit are encouraged to attend the local handicraft class run by the general Home Teacher. The Specialist Home Teacher attends whenever possible so that she can give them the individual attention they need in the class, which it is so difficult for the Home Teacher in charge to give with her whole class clamouring for attention. This brings the deaf-blind in touch with others in the area who are members of the same class. It is not always possible for a Specialist Home Teacher to attend classes as we have many and some meet on the same afternoon, but whenever possible she arranges to do so.

Quite a number of the deaf-blind also attend the local blind Clubs, sometimes with their own guides, and they enjoy attending the Clubs and meeting each other. Recently in a Club there were four deaf-blind women who had met socially quite a lot since the formation of our Specialist Service, and they were in a little group together when the Mayor and V.I.P.s arrived. The guests were quite fascinated by the extraordinarily rapid conversation of these four deaf-blind women who were enjoying a joke, while their guides were also talking together. The visitors were most impressed with this.

One of the women joining in this conversation had been very anti-social up to the time of the appointment of our specialist Home Teacher. She had always been deaf and had lost her sight, and the local Home Teacher had done a great deal of work with her. It was difficult in the first place to help her as she refused to learn the manual, but the Specialist Home Teacher worked extremely hard with her and when she had to attend hospital for, I think, corneal grafting, the Specialist went with her on her visits to hospital during her long and involved treatment. The Specialist got to know her very well indeed and she has developed into a very socially-minded happy woman. Her character has quite changed and she thoroughly enjoys the social events, and making friends.

Soon after our specialist Home Teacher was appointed she started a social Club for the deaf-blind in the west of the county. This meets monthly, and has a membership of twenty-four, some of whom attend quite regularly. Cars bring them from various areas of the county, and they all manage to get there somehow. More recently the second specialist Home Teacher formed a Club for those in the north of the county, which has nine or ten regular members. Some Home Teachers bring the deaf-blind from their own areas either by public or private transport, and some have their own guides. The specialist Home Teachers have made very great efforts to obtain voluntary workers and to teach these workers methods of communication, and they have been really quite successful. We find now that our Club members have made individual friends and a number of them enjoy conversing with each other, which is quite different from conversing with a guide. We live on the border of London, and a number of our deaf-blind people attend Clubs in London and East Ham, and two Clubs for Deaf and Dumb in our area, so they have quite a lot of social activity.

### **Holidays**

Miss Henham-Barrow mentioned that we have a holiday for deaf-blind people, and I would like to tell you about that. In 1955 we thought it would be worth while trying an experimental holiday for the deaf-blind and as the County Council were very keen we organised one in conjunction with the Middlesex Association for the Blind. This came about largely owing to the difficulty of finding suitable accommodation for deaf-blind people, and the long distances they had to travel if they went to either the Burnham or Hoylake Homes, in which case the specialist Home Teacher seemed to spend most of her time taking them or fetching them back again.

The Middlesex Association Home, Kelland House, Littlehampton, holds 22 people. The Association made the Home available to us for two weeks and the County Council undertook the maintenance of two Home Teachers for the fortnight. Several voluntary workers accompanied the party and two members of the staff of the Royal Society in Aid of the Deaf and Dumb, who brought with them three deaf-blind women from London or some other area. It was very experimental, but was quite an unqualified success and the holiday has now become an annual event, and eighteen deaf-blind men and women enjoy two weeks' holiday at the Home every year. Owing to the increased number we now send four Home Teachers to accompany the parties, and we are fortunate in having excellent voluntary helpers—you will realise how fortunate when I tell you that one is Miss Moody Stuart.

It is difficult to convey what a holiday means to our deaf-blind people, but you will understand because you have listened to Miss Henham-Barrow. Although the holiday is not confined to Club members most of the people who go do belong to one or other of the Clubs, so they know they are amongst friends, and also know that the voluntary helpers understand their needs. The Home Teachers have the time to devote to the individual, and that is a very important thing for deaf-blind people. We find that the holiday has done a great deal to rehabilitate the deaf-blind to a more normal and a more active life. It is not possible, as Miss Henham-Barrow was able to do, to allot one guide to each deaf-blind person, but every day each sighted guide is allocated to one or two deaf-blind persons. That guide is responsible for, first of all explaining the day's activities to the individual deaf-blind in her charge and then looking after them during the day. The guides are changed round so that they have an opportunity of meeting different deaf-blind people.

The County Council has made an allowance each year for incidental expenses such as outings. We take them for expeditions by bus, car or coach to places of interest. We have visited Arundel Castle, and some of them last year visited Chichester Cathedral. We do try to take on holiday the people who can communicate by means of the deaf-blind manual alphabet and those who need encouragement to do so, and the concentrated use of the manual over the fortnight enables them to become much more fluent. I would like to say that we have noticed after the first few days the relaxation which occurs with the deaf-blind people, and the warmth and friendliness which pervade the house is most noticeable. I usually go down for a day, and I pick that up immediately—that there is a warmth and happiness and contentment in the house.

Last year we took for the first time a woman of about sixty who had so far made no progress with the manual because no one at home would talk to her. Whilst there she tried a little, and was so anxious to keep in touch with the people when she met them in the Clubs later, that she really worked hard with the Specialist and I believe she has now become quite fluent. Another, an Austrian woman, who knew practically no English and was often very difficult to understand, is now learning the language by means of the deaf-blind manual, which I think is a great achievement on the part of our specialist Home Teacher. The guides take their charges on the beach and for walks, and those who want to go to church go with a guide who can interpret the service for them, and they also take them into the town on shopping expeditions. As the holiday is in May, and the town is not crowded with



visitors, the shop assistants are very kind and patient and are most helpful and allow the deaf-blind people to make their own choice of what they want to take home. We find they definitely know what they want and are quite able to make up their minds when they are able to handle and examine each article. They also very greatly enjoy their morning coffee, and I have experienced myself much the same as Miss Henham-Barrow did.

The Matron and the staff at the Home enter into this holiday in a most wonderful way and the staff have learnt the deaf-blind manual alphabet. I think it is very nice of the Matron to give up her sitting-room to our staff and voluntary workers for the whole fortnight, and of the staff at the Home to deal entirely with the meals for the deaf-blind people, so that during mealtimes and afterwards, the sighted guides and helpers are free for a little relaxation. We find they should be relieved of some of the strain of communicating with, and looking after, the deaf-blind for a short part of each day. Several of the deaf-blind people have said that this is the event of the year to which they most look forward. They have wonderful memories to take with them when they are alone in the darkness and silence of their normal lives. Last year a deaf-blind woman, when she arrived in the Ladychapel of the Cathedral knelt and gave thanks for the holiday and insisted that her companions did the same, and another deaf-blind woman said she had dusted every monument in Sussex.

### **Some Cases :**

Because we have this holiday scheme we have not joined in the S.R.A.B. experiment at Bournemouth, but the Jewish Blind Society arranged for one of the deaf-blind girls, aged thirty-seven, to go with a member of their staff. She had learnt some speech, but when she was first visited by the specialist Home Teacher, soon after she moved into Middlesex, she had lost that speech. The specialist Home Teacher by spending much time with her, was able to teach her braille, and an interesting development was, that through learning braille, she did regain some speech, and this was further developed at Bournemouth. We are now hoping that through the influence of the Jewish Society she will go for a course of rehabilitation.

Another of our deaf-blind women who usually goes on holiday suffers from retinitis pigmentosa and has a certain amount of vision. She was also educated at a deaf school and was trained as a laundress, but was taken away at the age of sixteen by her mother, and shortly after that she moved into Middlesex. She is now living with her sister and brother-in-law, her mother having died. The brother-in-law is interested in the girl and has done



his best to help her. Our specialist Home Teacher found he was trying to teach her simple words and she took her to the Audiology unit where she had a number of lessons with Mr. Pearson, but unfortunately something happened to stop it. He was teaching her by means of small models of animals and simple picture books, using what sight she had, but unfortunately a member of her family picked up a simple picture book which was being used for the lessons and laughed, with the result that this sensitive girl refused to go for her speech lessons. I am afraid the damage has been done, and it shows how quick the deaf-blind are to react to the actions of thoughtless people.

I think that our specialist service has enabled more deaf-blind people to meet each other and so widen their experience and their social contacts. They have for the most part lost that feeling of isolation and become more responsive to any approach that is made to them. They also like to feel they have a specialist Home Teacher for themselves alone and one who has the time to devote to their special needs. As we know, most blind people enjoy having the "Blind lady" (or the "Blind gentleman") and I think the deaf-blind like to have their own "Deaf-blind lady". We find that as we develop the service, we create a need for further services as the deaf-blind become more alert and demand more activities and more attention.

We do everything we can to co-operate with the National Association for the Deaf and Dumb and with the National Deaf-Blind Helpers' League. One of our girls who has been blind from childhood and led an extremely dull life with very little of interest—not because she hadn't the intelligence to be trained, but because her family had refused to let her leave home and learn anything about handicrafts and braille—quite suddenly lost her hearing one day. The specialist Home Teacher spent a great deal of time helping her and teaching her the manual alphabet, and she has now become the secretary of the Middlesex Branch of the National Deaf-Blind Helpers' League, and that has given her an immense amount of interest. She now has a very full life indeed and she is doing extremely well. She has been up to Peterborough to Mr. Sculthorpe's meetings, and last year we sent a party of deaf-blind people by coach to Peterborough to the National Deaf-Blind Helpers' League Rally. On Saturday next there is going to be a party for the Middlesex Branch which Mr. Sculthorpe is attending, and although our specialist Home Teacher is helping in the organisation of this, the correspondence and a great deal of the work is being done by this deaf-blind girl who is acting as secretary.

I do not want to infer in this talk that we have done more

for our deaf-blind than in an area where there is no specialist service. Naturally our Home Teachers have become more experienced with deaf-blind people, but all that they have done, could be done by a Home Teacher with a vocation for the work and time to devote to the deaf-blind people. I would like to stress, however, that where it is practicable, a specialist Home Teacher creates a more essential service, as all Home Teachers cannot be expected to have the same sense of vocation for the deaf-blind as for the blind. It is recognised that full-time work among the deaf-blind imposes a very great strain on Home Teachers, and our County Council has endeavoured to ease the burden to some extent by the provision of an extra week's annual leave for the Specialist.

I hope what has been said will promote discussion and you will feel that where the numbers justify it there is some merit in a specialist service.

**The Chairman** said that she was sure the Conference had not missed Mr. Evans as much as it thought it would. She wanted to take the opportunity of introducing and welcoming Mr. H. T. Salter, Chief Welfare Officer of Birmingham. He and several of his staff had been present at the Conference and were very interested.

With regard to the holidays, doctors were recommending going away, even for the humble cold and there was no doubt the change did something for one physically. She advocated as many holidays as possible for the deaf-blind. She thought there must be very good liaison between Local Authorities and Voluntary Associations so that the money could be found for holidays.

She then declared the meeting open for discussion.

### **General Discussion**

Miss Reed (Wolverhampton) "Could you define the word 'Deaf-Blind' What degree of deafness would distinguish the deaf-blind from the blind who are hard of hearing?"

Miss Henham-Barrow replied that form B.D.9 gave some elucidations, and she quoted Table 6, Column D. "Deaf without speech means persons who are unable to hear the speech of others and who cannot speak themselves. Deaf with speech means persons unable to hear the speech of others but who can speak themselves. Hard of hearing, those able to speak but who are partially deaf to a handicapping degree, who are able to hear the speech of others and carry on oral conversation.

Miss Adams—"I think we made this rather clear distinction because when the hearing aids were being provided it was difficult to know who were the people who had the greatest need—the

people who could not be helped by a hearing aid but had sufficient vision to make use of their sight ; or the hard core of people who could not hear speech either with or without a hearing aid, and in addition were unable to see or speak. There are very few people who are unable to speak, hear, and see at all, but they do represent the real hard core of the problem, so we specially asked for a return of those people. Then there is the second group who are deaf but able to speak. We also have the group who are hard of hearing and cannot see. I think with the development of the hearing aid, quite a lot who were in the category of deaf-blind should now be in the category of hard of hearing. One hopes that the type of person Miss Henham-Barrow was speaking of, will, as a result of attending the Refresher Course, come out of the category of deaf-blind and possibly be in that of blind and hard of hearing. There is no hard and fast line ; it has to be decided where the need is greatest. Every year when these statistics are compiled, one should look at each person anew and review the need for referring people to an ear or eye specialist."

Mr. Winterbottom (Stoke-on-Trent), asked Miss Seymour how many of the 99 in Middlesex could hear at all.

Miss Seymour—"We allocate to the specialist Home Teachers the people who cannot hear ordinary speech. That is our criterion for specialist service. Sometimes a deaf-blind person who can catch a word or two but is not able to benefit by oral conversation, and it is left to the specialist Home Teacher to decide, after visiting such a person, whether it is a case for her to deal with or not. Classification on the B.D.9 is one thing, but the actual dealing with a person is something quite different. I did say that we had 87 deaf-blind, and they are generally people who cannot benefit by oral conversation.

Since the specialist service started several deaf-blind have been found only hard of hearing after re-testing. As they have already made friends, we let them continue to be visited by the Specialist Home Teacher and to join in the holiday.

Mrs. Mary Stuart (Middlesex) mentioned the difficulty of rehabilitating deaf-blind people, who, are after aural tests were found to have residual hearing, if they had not heard for some time and did not know what speech was. She thought that was where the specialist and the family could help and was interested to know more about the three people on the Course, particularly the man who had not heard a human voice for eight years.

**Miss Henham Barrow :** "This man had possessed some hearing before, but I think he meant hearing the human voice with any



continuity. Before having an aid he got about one word in ten if we screamed at him. At first his aid magnified everything so tremendously he would not wear it again. I had to tell him quietly that he would pick up all his wife's words if she spoke as I was doing. He regulated it before he left though he put up with all kinds of sounds at first as he was so excited.

During the testing by the audiologist Miss S. suddenly heard everything and held a most surprisingly intelligent conversation. It was incredible—one minute her face all screwed up and tense, and the next relaxed and saying, "Yes, my people come from Worthing, too." She had only to be taught to use the aid.

The third, Mrs. W., had less hearing than the other two and is having exercises. Her Home Teacher is also visiting her more than before in order to teach her to use the aid and to identify sounds.

I should have mentioned something else in our constructive results. You know our Region has a Deaf-Blind Advisory Panel consisting of six people actively engaged in blind welfare with special knowledge of the deaf-blind who are called in on occasions to assist the Home Teachers? We suggest extending this panel to include audiologists.

Also I shall recommend to my Committee that we ask the Nursing Colleges to include some information about the deaf-blind and the manual in their training courses. This is because sometimes nurses are unable to talk to deaf-blind patients. In one of the Birmingham hospitals the ward sister produced a card so that a patient from the Deaf-Blind Home there, could be spoken to."

In reply to a request Miss Henham-Barrow demonstrated the method of writing with block capital letters advocated by Mr. Sculthorpe. She said it was hoped to put the braille contractions and abbreviations used by Mr. Sculthorpe into the suggested ink print pamphlet.

**The Chairman** thought it was very important to have a Missioner for the deaf in Court to interpret before certifying any deaf person. It was equally important for information about the deaf-blind manual to be available to hospital staffs.

**Miss Baron** (Holland) enquired how to use the manual with people who could not spell and Miss Henham-Barrow replied that the phonetic system was suggested on the Course. **Miss Holmes** (Walsall) confirmed that the phonetic system worked exceptionally well with one of her cases.

**Mrs. Pattenden** (Birmingham) thought there should be some contractions for block capitals to speed up the system. Very



few deaf-blind knew braille well enough to interpret braille contractions.

The method of receiving messages by the deaf-blind person placing his hand on the lips or throat of the person speaking was mentioned, and the Chairman said that method was being successfully taught at Condover. Miss Henham-Barrow said it was not a method used easily by adults as it demanded tremendous concentration. It was more often used in educating children. Another method was morse. A deaf-blind woman on the Course knew it and gave a demonstration. She received it through the forehead. With the adult blind it was a case of looking round for the easiest method.

A speaker stressed that block capitals were easier for voluntary helpers than the manual although they required more concentration on the part of the deaf-blind. Miss Henham-Barrow said that block letters should always supplement the manual and not replace it. All methods of communication should be used and not only one.

### **Votes of thanks**

**Miss Parkes (Staffs.)** It gives me very great pleasure indeed to propose a Vote of Thanks to the speakers for their most interesting talks this afternoon. I do not think I have ever been to a Conference where we have had more interesting and helpful speakers. There have been times when I have heard it said as I have walked away from a conference room : " Well, we haven't learnt very much, have we ! " but I think all of us will go away to-day saying that we have learnt such a lot from our speakers, and although at the beginning of the afternoon we were disappointed to know that Mr. Edward Evans would not be here, because we had looked forward to him speaking to us, we have been most fortunate in having speakers who could not only take up the time allotted to them on their own subject but could also take up the time allotted to Mr. Evans as well. We have really been most interested, and I am sure Miss Henham-Barrow cannot but be inspired and thrilled at this idea of starting a week's course for deaf-blind people such as she has recently had. It must have been wonderful ; and I know it can not only have been thrilling but most helpful to the deaf-blind people who went to Bournemouth for that week, and also very stimulating for the Home Teacher—not only the Home Teacher who went with the deaf-blind person but when that Home Teacher came back she told other Home Teachers about it. I think we have all, as a result of this, felt more enthusiastic about trying to do more for our deaf-blind people, and I know from experience that there

is no greater thrill than to get something over to a deaf-blind person. Things that to us do not seem very much, to a deaf-blind person mean such a lot. I was very pleased to hear Miss Seymour say that every district cannot have a specialist for the deaf-blind but the ordinary Home Teacher can do quite a lot, and I know that is quite true. If the Home Teacher is sufficiently interested she can really do a lot for her deaf-blind people although she is not a specialist in deaf-blind work. I should like to conclude by saying thank you very, very much for your most interesting and helpful talks.

The Chairman asked Mr. Winterbottom, of Stoke-on-Trent, to propose a Vote of Thanks to the Lord Mayor.

**Mr. Winterbottom** (Stoke-on-Trent). No one would wish to leave this Conference without expressing our very sincere thanks to the Lord Mayor and Corporation of Birmingham for their hospitality. It is fitting that this Conference on the care of the deaf-blind should be held in Birmingham which was, as we have already heard, the first city to found a Home for the Deaf-Blind, and also it is the cradle of that excellent organisation the Deaf-Blind Helpers' League. Birmingham has long been the centre of blind work in the Midlands, and many of the most intelligent and proficient blind people in the country have received their training in the local Schools and Municipal Workshops. The Municipal Workshops and the Schools are excellent. You have ample proof of this in the fact that so many members who were formerly on the staff of the Schools and Workshops occupy prominent positions in the leading institutions of the country, and have done so with distinction in the past. The University is also in the forefront of experiment in training teachers and other workers for the blind. It is always much easier to pay full attention to speakers if you are sitting in comfort in peaceful and beautiful surroundings, as we are in this building, and I am sure everyone will agree that we do express our very sincere thanks to the Lord Mayor and Corporation, not only for their hospitality to-day but for all Birmingham has done, is doing and will continue to do for the blind people of this country.

The Chairman said she would convey these thanks to the Lord Mayor.

Miss Henham-Barrow then asked Miss Joyce Cliff to propose a Vote of Thanks to the Chairman.

**Miss Cliff** (Middlesex). We would like to thank Mrs. Wood very much indeed for taking the Chair. Mr. Winterbottom said that it was fitting that we should hold the Conference in Birmingham, and especially with Councillor Mrs. Wood as Chairman, with her interest in this work, and we hope that next time a

Conference is held in Birmingham it will be more clement weather. You have kept us very well in order and we would like to thank you most warmly for taking the Chair to-day.

The Chairman thanked every one, and said she was happy and had enjoyed being at the Conference. As they were five minutes late she was going to say "Thank you very much indeed. I take an interest in your work, and I wish you the greatest success".

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